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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 43 *(continued)*

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/54/457, A/54/495)

Draft resolutions (A/54/L.40, A/54/L.41)

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, my delegation wishes to state that the position of Chile on the situation in the Middle East is strictly to abide by principles of international law. We recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and we also recognize Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

During the course of this year, the peace process in the Middle East has taken a positive turn, which Chile welcomes and wholeheartedly supports, as it has done from the outset, beginning with the 1991 Madrid Conference and in particular since the historic occasion in Oslo in 1993, when the Israeli and Palestinian people decisively opted for peace.

The signing of the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum on 4 September last and the resumption of talks for a definitive settlement represent an extremely important step in this process. We know that it is difficult and complicated and that major obstacles have been encountered along the way. In any event, we understand that the Israeli and Palestinian people are prepared to move forward with the peace process, because they know that to live in harmony and friendship is a logical, sustainable and necessary objective for both peoples. They know with growing certainty that only peace and good-neighbourliness will enable them to envisage a secure future for their children, and they know that the well-being of all depends on the achievement of a just and lasting solution in the Middle East.

For that reason, we hope that the negotiations between the Israeli and the Palestinian people will continue without interruption and that no unilateral steps will be taken that would affect this process or prejudge the final results of the talks.

The negotiations between the Palestinian and the Israeli people should also serve as an impetus for talks between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights. Similarly, Chile hopes that there will be full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on southern Lebanon.

Chile has excellent relations with the State of Israel, the neighbouring Arab countries and the Palestinian National Authority. Like the rest of the world, Chile is

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following very closely and with great concern the developments in the Middle East. What happens in that region is important to all of us. We suffer when innocent victims die in attacks, and we welcome such political events as the recent signing of the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum. The triumph of peace and understanding in the Middle East is the triumph of peace for all of us. This meeting of the General Assembly reflects this interest.

The Middle East is a region that is dear to the hearts of all Chilean people. In our country there are a number of Chilean people of Arab origin, most of them from Palestine, and there is a large Jewish population in Chile. They all live together in peace and are proof that coexistence is not only possible, it can be very fruitful.

Mr. Thayeb (Indonesia): Although more than half a century has elapsed, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which remains the question of Palestine, has been the source of endless pain and suffering. The historic breakthrough of the Madrid Conference promised to usher in a new era of peace and tranquillity in the Middle East region. It led to a series of positive developments, strengthening our hopes and aspirations that one of the most tragic conflict situations will be finally resolved.

However, in recent years, our expectations were dashed by a stalemate in the peace negotiations, compounded by the fact that commitments were reneged upon and agreements were not implemented, and the promise of peace receded into the background. Throughout this entire arduous period, the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese leaders have demonstrated great fortitude and commitment to the peace process, not only in words but also in deeds.

As was evident from our deliberations in the General Assembly on item 44, entitled "Question of Palestine", the message of the international community was resoundingly clear: everlasting peace can be established only with the full and unfettered exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab lands, including the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif, with all aspects of the situation in the Middle East being addressed, including the issue of refugees.

The step forward within the framework of the peace negotiations between the Governments of Palestine and Israel, particularly the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on 4 September 1999, was therefore gratifying. Our optimism is premised on the fact that that Memorandum touched on a number of significant issues, including a timeline for implementation of all commitments reached between the two sides since the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Moreover, its importance lies in the reaffirmation of the desire of the parties to reach a final settlement of all permanent status issues by September 2000. Aware of the tenuous path ahead leading to an end over more than half a century of enmity, hatred and mistrust, we remain confident that the unwavering commitment of the Palestinian leaders will be fulfilled.

It is against this backdrop that actions intended to change the demographic composition in the occupied territories, including the Holy City, and the confiscation of Arab lands for the expansion of settlements must cease. Not only do such activities contravene the spirit and letter of the accords already reached, but they also undermine the trust and confidence that is so essential to moving the peace process forward.

Over the years, scores of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly have reiterated that a just and final settlement of the Palestinian issue is deemed imperative but, concurrently, that lasting peace demands the attainment of a comprehensive peace for the whole of the Middle East conflict. Thus, simultaneous progress is of the utmost importance to address the fundamental unresolved questions, especially on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

Indonesia remains firmly convinced that there can be no lasting solution to the Middle East conflict without the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, and the full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), based on the land-for-peace formula. Only through such an approach can the right of all peoples and countries in the region to independence and security within internationally recognized boundaries be respected.

The United Nations continues to bear a historical and moral responsibility for resolving this intractable conflict in all its aspects. Undoubtedly, the Organization and its specialized agencies have a valuable role to play, given the scope of their assistance to the peoples of the occupied territories. My delegation welcomes the appointment of the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Roed-Larsen of Norway, to ensure that the support

efforts of the United Nations and donors are integrated and coordinated in the vital field of development assistance.

The end of the twentieth century demands that the strong yearning of peoples in the region for freedom, independence and justice soon be fulfilled. Strife and instability should be relegated to history, and sustained development and prosperity should be facilitated so that they can become the order of the next millennium. For this to materialize, however, the historic opportunity for peace should be seized so that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace can ultimately reign in the Middle East.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the threshold of the third millennium a representative of Lebanon is once again standing at this rostrum, and the question of the Middle East is still on the agenda of the General Assembly, as it has been for many years, while we wait for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. This question must be resolved in accordance with the commitments undertaken at the Madrid Peace Conference, which adopted the land-for-peace formula and the principles of international legitimacy, as represented in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Israel's occupation of parts of southern Lebanon and western Bekaa has continued for more than 21 years. Israel rejected resolution 425 (1978), which the Security Council adopted on 19 March 1978 and which called upon Israel to withdraw its forces unconditionally and immediately from all Lebanese territory. Not only does Israel still occupy Lebanese territory, but it continues its aggression, which has led to tragic occurrences, in 1982, 1993 and 1996, as well as the aggression of June 1999. Israeli air raids have destroyed many civilian facilities in Lebanon, thereby violating the rights of the Lebanese people as they go about their daily lives and jeopardizing their existence and security within their own territory. The Israelis are using the rule of might in place of the principles of justice to prevent the legitimate restoration to the Lebanese people of their occupied lands. In doing so, they are violating the understanding of April 1996 that set up rules and regulations for the protection of civilians, under the supervision of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Lebanon is committed to that understanding as a means of bringing about a full and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory.

Israeli jails and detention camps in occupied southern Lebanon contain more than 141 prisoners and detainees, and that number is increasing daily. They have been imprisoned for many years. Some have been sentenced, and others are being held without trial. They have become hostages, held by the Israeli authorities for bargaining purposes. The Israeli Supreme Court has accepted this situation, which contradicts all principles of justice and all international laws, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Lebanon calls upon the international community and its humanitarian organizations to continue their efforts to obtain the release of those prisoners, who are exposed to various forms of physical and psychological torture, and to force Israel to close permanently the Al-khiyam prison in the occupied Lebanese territories.

Lebanon continues to call for the unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). That resolution does not call on the parties concerned to undertake negotiations; rather, it calls expressly upon Israel to withdraw immediately and unconditionally.

Lebanon therefore rejects Israel's attempt to begin a process of negotiations on Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which lays down specific arrangements. Such an attempt could undermine civil peace in Lebanon and delay the process of advancement and prosperity.

It is only natural that, in order to bring about that unconditional withdrawal, the Lebanese people should show solidarity with the resistance to Israeli occupation and should claim resistance as a legitimate right of self-defence and of defence of Lebanese territory. That falls within the framework of the principles accepted in the April 1996 memorandum of understanding. Here, I must note that Lebanon values the positive, constructive role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We thank the officers and personnel of that Force for the many sacrifices they have made since 1978.

Lebanon is among a group of neighbouring countries that mutually interact; we believe that our stability and prosperity are indissolubly linked to the stability and prosperity of our brethren. We therefore joined other Arab parties at the Madrid Peace Conference with a view to achieving a just and comprehensive peace and to ending the cycle of violence and tension in our region. Lebanon is fully convinced that its negotiating approach should be on the Syrian track; that concurrence is in the

strategic interest of both our countries, and gives Lebanon, Syria and Israel enough space to undertake serious negotiations that will solve all pending problems and achieve the settlement we all desire. Lebanon and Syria are very serious about their peace option based on full withdrawal in exchange for just and comprehensive peace. But that requires serious political will and speedy action on the part of Israel in order to prevent political manoeuvring that would be at the expense of the declared principles of a peaceful settlement, founded on the principles enunciated at the Madrid Peace Conference, which were in turn based on the formula of land for peace and on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Moreover, the negotiations must be resumed at the point they had reached in 1996, bearing in mind the outcome of negotiations that would guarantee withdrawal from Syrian territory to the line of 4 June 1967.

In this context, we stress the role of the two sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the Russian Federation, in seeking to bring about a just and comprehensive peace. We are also relying on an effective European role in the economic and political spheres, particularly during the later part of the negotiations.

We believe that the question of Palestine is the principal course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and therefore support the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. We support and stress the importance of restoring the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, prominent among which are the right to self-determination, the right to establish an independent State of their own, with Al-Quds as its capital, and the right to return to the lands from which they were displaced, in accordance with resolution 194 (III). It is important for us today to stress the absolute rejection by the Lebanese Constitution of settling Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. We call upon the international community to shoulder its responsibility in finding a just settlement that will address the final status of Palestinian refugees in accordance with internationally recognized principles.

This question must be approached not only from the economic, social and humanitarian angles, but also from the political perspective that lies at the core of the Palestinian question. Any peace settlement that overlooks the issue of Palestinian refugees will be unstable and will lead to further instability and serious crises.

Lebanon has suffered a great deal as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The achievement of a just and comprehensive peace would be in the basic interests of Lebanon and of the other parties concerned. Such a settlement should improve the opportunities for social and human development and should bring about a better future for succeeding generations. That cannot be accomplished unless Israel responds to the basic requirement for peace: full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories.

Mr. Al-Sameen (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): As we approach the new millennium, the world feels optimistic despite the challenges we shall face both because of national, regional and international developments that will arise in the coming century and because of the huge pending challenges that will persist into the twenty-first century.

One of the most important of these challenges is the situation in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine. The international community views the peace process launched at Madrid in 1991 as the most serious initiative aimed at putting an end to a conflict that has persisted for decades and that has led to the haemorrhage of great human and economic potential from the peoples of the region. The Madrid Peace Conference and the results achieved on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and the formula of land for peace, established commitments and obligations for the parties concerned. These should not be questioned or renounced, having been adopted by the parties themselves.

Prospects for the Middle East peace to which we all look forward have nearly materialized as we approach the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the new millennium. This makes it imperative for all parties, particularly the Israeli Government, to seize this opportunity to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

My Government welcomed the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel as a very important step forward in the peace process. We look forward to the two parties concerned implementing the agreements and commitments they have signed, and we call upon the Israeli party to end its occupation of all occupied Arab territories. Persistence of the occupation is one of the main reasons for the absence of peace. The Israeli party's continuing demolition of Arab houses, establishment and expansion of settlements and renegotiation of issues that have been agreed upon will ultimately thwart efforts to bring about peace, will give the opponents of the peace process a chance to adversely effect that process, and will waste a

historic opportunity to achieve the peace to which all the peoples of the region aspire.

The new Israeli Government is called upon to take decisive steps to resume negotiations with Syria at the point where they left off, to put an end to Israeli occupation of Syrian territory and to withdraw to the lines of 4 June 1967. As for Lebanon, we call upon Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon and western Bekaa, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The international community, as represented in this Organization, is called upon to play a constructive role in establishing a comprehensive, permanent and just peace in the Middle East based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and legitimate international decisions. The most important of these decisions is the continuation of the peace process on the basis of legitimate international resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), the formula of land for peace and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on their land, including the decision to establish an independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. We would emphasize, first, the need to nullify all measures taken by the Israeli Government to change demographic and geographic facts in Al-Quds, in accordance with and in implementation of Security Council resolution 465 (1980), which considers all settlements illegitimate and calls upon Israel to dismantle them; secondly, the need to bring about a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, concerning the right of refugees to return or to receive compensation; thirdly, the need for full respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention and for a halt to all Israeli violations of its provisions, along with a follow-up of the results of the conference of High Contracting Parties in case Israel continues to violate the provisions of the Convention; and fourthly, the need to support Syria in its logical and just demand to resume negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks at the point where they left off and the need for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan heights to the lines of 4 June 1967, as well as an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and western Bekaa.

My Government, in its belief that the impact of all types of weapons of mass destruction on humanity will be devastating, has now acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The NPT regime will not succeed unless we bring about complete international adherence to it. We call upon Israel, the only country in the Middle East that has not yet become a party to the NPT, to subject all its nuclear facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The fact that those facilities are not controlled by IAEA safeguards will have very dangerous effects on the health and the environment of the peoples of the region. As the review of the NPT approaches, my delegation calls for transforming the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone within the framework of the United Nations as a serious step towards bringing about a climate that promotes peace, stability and security.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The international community fully recognizes that the Middle East peace process, which was launched in Madrid in 1991, was based on the implementation of internationally legitimate resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on Lebanon. It was also based on an important principle, land for peace. The Madrid Conference was followed by strenuous and long peace talks that resulted in some progress, including the unequivocal pledge made by the former Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. That pledge, deposited with the American Administration in July 1994, includes a commitment by the then Labour Government of Israel to withdraw to the lines of 4 June 1967 as an indispensable step before dealing with the remaining elements of a full peace agreement. The facts and evolution of this matter are written in the records of the American, Syrian and Israeli sides.

It is well known that the security arrangements on which Rabin concentrated and to which he accorded extreme attention could not have been discussed in detail had there not been an agreement on the line of withdrawal, which must be declared in advance in order to allow the parties to set up the security arrangements on both sides of the line of 4 June. This is what actually happened.

During the debates on the security arrangements, it became clear that there was a need to agree on the principles and objectives of these arrangements so that no side could set up any arrangements that would ignore the security of the other side. In this regard, the Assembly and the international community know full well who is in more urgent need of security: is it the occupier, or is it those who are under occupation?

The discussions among the three sides — Syrian, American and Israeli — went on for a long time, culminating in May 1995 in the definition of those principles and objectives. After that date, a series of reckless actions and offences either in Israel or by Israel took place. The most prominent of these was the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, which was followed by the halting of the peace talks on the Syrian-Israeli track in early 1996. This was followed by an attack against Lebanon and the Qana massacre in April 1996, which was condemned by the General Assembly in the relevant resolution. The massacre flew in the face of the logic of peace altogether.

Despite these obvious facts, a number of Israeli officials still deny the existence of Rabin's pledge and try to camouflage their thwarting of the peace process and their squandering of the opportunities to achieve peace by claiming that it is Syria that committed such negative actions after receiving Rabin's pledge.

This raises several questions. For example, how can Syria be blamed for allegedly failing to seize the opportunity to sign a peace agreement under the conditions I have described, conditions that were created by Israel? How can Syria logically be held responsible for delaying the peace process before completing its other elements, such as security arrangements and normal peaceful relations when it was Israel that halted the peace talks with Syria in early March 1996? The talks continue to be stalled.

In this context, I would like to reaffirm the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', to the General Assembly at its current session in early October. He said that the pledge, in and of itself, does not constitute a peace agreement; rather, it is an essential part of such an agreement. We call for the implementation of the rest of the agreement, of those parts related to normal peaceful relations and security arrangements based on the principles and objectives arrived at under the auspices of and with the participation of the United States of America.

When the current Israeli Prime Minister assumed power, he made various statements, including a pledge to revive the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, so as to pave the way for comprehensive peace in the region. However, these statements, which met with approval at the time, were soon followed by disappointing statements and steps. Since then, the conduct and actions of the Israeli Government have flagrantly contradicted those initial statements.

An evaluation of the policy of the Israeli Government during the past six months clearly shows the following. First, this Government is waging with increasing vigour a vicious settlement campaign in the occupied Syrian Golan and in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel has confiscated more land and has built more settlements. It has also assisted the settlers in the Golan and provided them with incentives to expand their settlements — and this was done at the time when Prime Minister Barak was declaring his intention to resume the talks on the Syrian track. During this period the settlement campaign has extended into the Gaza Strip.

Second, Barak's Government still refuses to acknowledge Rabin's pledge; hence, it still shirks Israel's commitment to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. This boundary line is indisputable.

Third, some Israeli officials say they want to resume talks with Syria without preconditions. This underscores their failure to recognize Rabin's pledge and the results arrived at in the talks held before March 1996. Syria, however, is not imposing any preconditions — rather, it is recalling a previous commitment and a fact fully known to the parties concerned. Syria also affirms the importance of commitment to the results of the previous negotiations.

Fourth, Israel has been bombing southern Lebanon on a daily basis, dropping nail bombs and killing innocent citizens in successive air raids. Israel is killing men, women, children and the elderly in Lebanese towns and villages, destroying civilian facilities and infrastructure. All of this is taking place while Israel is talking about withdrawing from the south. How does this make sense?

Fifth, the insistence by the Barak Government on treating Al-Quds as the eternal capital of Israel is a grave violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and a poses a grave risk to peace.

Sixth, Israel's continued occupation of the occupied Arab territories and its refusal to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967 is a rejection of the principle of land for peace, international legitimacy and international law and a breach of the Charter of the United Nations, which is the constitution for international relations.

Seventh, Israel's denial of the rights of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland is a violation of human rights and of the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

This assessment raises several questions for the international community, questions for which the answers are self-evident. First, is the continued Israel occupation of the Arab territories compatible with peace? Secondly, are the expansion of settlements, settlement activities and confiscation of Arab territories consistent with peace? Thirdly, do ongoing and daily acts of aggression against southern Lebanon and west Beka'a conform to the search for peace? Fourthly, does the Israeli Government's denial of Mr. Rabin's pledge of a full withdrawal by Israel from the Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967 indicate a serious intention to achieve peace? Fifthly, is the Israeli Government's insistence on considering Al-Quds the united capital of Israel consistent with a genuine desire to achieve peace in the region? The answer to these and many other similar questions is well known to the international community, which calls for commitment to the resolutions of the United Nations and to the implementation of the purposes and principles of its Charter.

The other day, someone indicated that a draft resolution had been prepared on the peace process in the Middle East, but that it had not been submitted to the General Assembly. While I thank the States sponsors of the text for their efforts, I wish that they had succeeded in convincing Israel to accept the principle of land for peace, which is the basis of the Middle East peace process and the cornerstone of the Madrid process. It is also considered to be the very essence of the American peace initiative, especially in the light of the fact that if Israel, which rejected the text, had committed itself to the principle of land for peace, the General Assembly would not have been deprived of the draft resolution. The same thing occurred last year, because Israel does not want peace for land. Rather, it wants peace for peace. That is why it rejected the draft resolution.

In this regard, I wish to cite a letter written by former United States President George Bush on 1 June 1991 to President Hafez Al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, published in his book *All the Best*:

(*spoke in English*)

> "I want to make clear that we will be doing so on the only basis possible for a comprehensive peace: Territory for peace applied to all fronts, including the Golan Heights. We will not change this fundamental policy position of ours; nor will we change our non-recognition of Israel's purported "Annexation" of the Golan Heights. While Secretary Baker tells me he made these points to you, we both feel they deserve added emphasis and greater consideration by you." (George Bush, *All the Best*, Scribner, New York, 1999, p. 524).

(*spoke in Arabic*)

One delegation has the habit of stating that there is no need for a resolution on the Golan or on Al-Quds. Therefore, the Golan and Al-Quds must remain outside the General Assembly's purview, on the pretext that the United Nations is not the appropriate forum for discussing matters relating to the peace process. I should like to emphasize here that the United Nations resolutions are the terms of reference and the historic framework for justice in international relations, including the Middle East peace process, which is based on them. The democratic nature of international relations requires transparency in order to apprise the international community of the truth behind developments. The international community is the source of support for efforts to revive the peace process, especially since Israel ignores international resolutions, although they represent the scales of justice and right. We feel that these resolutions are indispensable because they are an imperative framework for preserving the historic rights of peoples.

The Palestinian people has not accepted occupation and is struggling bravely to attain its legitimate and inalienable national rights. The Syrian Arab Republic will pursue its steadfast defence of the just cause of the Palestinian people until that people is able to exercise its legitimate right to establish its independent State on its own land, with Al-Quds as its capital, as well as its rights of return and to self-determination.

Syria is committed to the peace process on the basis of the Madrid Conference. After Mr. Barak's assumption of power, Syria affirmed its readiness to match every step with a similar one. It has also expressed and continues to express its willingness to resume the peace process at the point where it stopped in 1996. This would require Israel to commit itself to the pledge of the late Prime Minister Rabin of a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. In this regard, I wish to affirm that the Golan is Syrian and that Syria will not forfeit one grain of its soil or a single

one of its rights. Syria will not be prey to stalling and dilatory tactics that no longer deceive anyone. I should also like to affirm that Syria and Lebanon stand together and that the Syrian and Lebanese tracks run interdependently and are correlative to one another on the road to comprehensive peace. No one can uncouple them. Hence, the Israeli Government should not waste time and effort and miss the opportunity to achieve comprehensive peace in the region, as the Netanyahu Government did. Now more than ever before, realities in the region call now for a more active role by the United States, Russia and Europe, before the peoples of the region are overcome by disappointment. All genuine international efforts must be made to convince Israel of the need to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that will include security, stability, dignity and justice for all, on the basis of commitments stemming from the previous peace talks, particularly since Yitzhak Rabin made a clear commitment to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders; this was no hypothetical commitment.

Honourable, genuine peace requires courage based on credibility, commitment and non-procrastination; not the kind of courage that leads to capitulation. Syria is committed to saving this opportunity for peace. However, if this opportunity is squandered because of continued intransigence, rejection and manipulation of the various negotiating tracks, then Israel alone will bear the responsibility.

In conclusion, let me call on those States that believe in the justness of the Syrian position — a position in favour of a comprehensive and just peace — to sponsor draft resolution A/54/L.41, on the occupied Syrian Golan, and to vote in favour of that draft resolution.

Mr. Suh (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is pleased to see that progress is being made in advancing the peace process in the Middle East. The signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on 4 September 1999 in Cairo by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization is another breath of fresh air in a process that had stagnated since last year's Wye River Memorandum. In this context, we are pleased to note that the new agreement contains a time-frame for the implementation of all the commitments made by the two parties since Oslo and reaffirmed in 1998 by the Wye River Memorandum, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement on all permanent status issues by September 2000.

Through direct negotiations, the Israelis and the Palestinians have delimited a series of goals concerning security, the restoration of land and new economic possibilities. These goals represent steps towards building a partnership where new trust replaces old antagonisms. In particular, my delegation notes with satisfaction that the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum addresses the issues of further Israeli redeployment from the West Bank, the release of Palestinian prisoners by the Israelis, safe passage for Palestinians from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, the construction of the Gaza seaport and a timetable for permanent status negotiations. We are equally pleased to note that steps are already being taken to implement the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum.

Achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East for the new millennium would be a remarkable accomplishment after decades of instability and war in the region. Peace in the Middle East will significantly contribute to bringing greater peace and stability throughout the world. The leaders who have risked their lives to achieve peace and to further negotiations are to be admired for their vision and courage in the name of generations to come. Moreover, the efforts by those who have struggled to advance the cause of peace against the odds must be applauded and resolutely encouraged. The international community should therefore endeavour to create the most propitious environment for peace to be realized both on paper and in reality.

The importance of economic development cannot be overlooked. For peace to be lasting and genuine, economic prosperity and growth must come to all the populations involved in the conflict. In this light, my country is firmly committed to economic cooperation with the Palestinians. Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, has pointed out that the Palestinian economy remains on a weak foundation that is still under construction. However, he added the encouraging note that the Palestinian economy is growing at about 4 per cent per year and that employment opportunities are expanding as the Sharm el-Sheikh Agreement and its implementation allow people to believe once again that a comprehensive and lasting peace will be achieved. Indeed, building hope is key to building peace.

The Government of Korea has long believed in this ideal. Hence, at the very beginning of the peace process, in October 1993, my Government pledged a total of $5 million in grant aid and $10 million in soft loans to the Palestinians at the international conference on assistance to the Palestinians, held in Washington D.C.

Furthermore, in November 1998, at the Conference to Support Middle East Peace and Development, my Government pledged $2 million for the period of 2000-2004. I take this opportunity to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's commitment to continue expanding its economic cooperation.

As national economic development can better thrive in a dynamic regional context, the Government of the Republic of Korea has placed a great deal of importance on the Middle East and North African economic summits, in which we have participated since the first meeting. We contributed $1.5 million dollars, including over $1,280,000 towards the Middle East Desalination Research Centre.

Making peace a lasting reality in the Middle East can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiations based on the principle of land for peace, agreed upon at the Madrid Conference, and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Moreover, to ensure lasting trust, the agreements achieved thus far should be scrupulously respected and implemented.

With the improvement along the Israeli-Palestinian track, my Government hopes to see progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as well, for only a comprehensive peace settlement will bring true peace, security and stability to all the peoples of the region.

Peace in the Middle East would be an exemplary model for those who seek peace in other regions of the world. Thus, the Republic of Korea is fully committed to helping achieve peace, stability and security, as well as economic prosperity, in the Middle East.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina)(*spoke in Spanish*): At the beginning of this year, we noted a lack of progress in negotiations aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the Middle East question. Fortunately, the prospects at the end of this year are different now that the parties have resumed talks. Since the signing of the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum on 4 September, we have seen a new withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the West Bank, an agreement for the release of prisoners, the opening of a corridor between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the resumption of the permanent status negotiations. Similarly, in the trilateral negotiations of Oslo, the parties agreed to establish additional mechanisms on a timetable for finalizing the framework agreement on the final status.

Argentina would like to congratulate the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Barak, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Yasser Arafat, for the courage and wisdom they have shown throughout these complex negotiations. Their efforts give us renewed hope that peace ultimately will triumph in this region.

There are still important questions to resolve. That is why we ask the parties to pursue their dialogue and to maintain the achievements reached since the signing of the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum, ensuring that there is a necessary climate of mutual trust.

I wish to reiterate that peace in the Middle East must be achieved on the basis of full application in good faith of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), as well as the agreements of Madrid and Oslo, the Washington Declaration of Principles and the Sharm El-Sheikh Memorandum. It is only within the framework of strict compliance with these instruments that the delicate questions involved in the final status will be resolved.

In the light of this, we renew our call on the parties to abstain from carrying out acts which would prejudge the final status and destroy the delicate balance which has been achieved with such great effort. In this framework, the construction of settlements in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, is a unilateral measure which runs counter to the long-term and fundamental interests of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours. At the same time, Argentina firmly condemns any acts of violence and rejects as inadmissible the use of terrorist acts. Israel has the right to live within internationally recognized and safe borders, without acts or threats of acts of violence.

Bilateral negotiations are the driving force in this peace process, and it is through them that we will find a solution to all pending issues. However, we must recall that the United Nations has a special and historic responsibility to Palestine which has been maintained and consolidated throughout half a century. The creation of peacekeeping operations, the uninterrupted assistance to Palestinian refugees and the personal commitment of the Secretaries-General to peace are clear signs of this.

Argentina feels that stability and economic and social development are elements which will contribute to the consolidation of the peace process. This is why my country has participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since their inception and, more recently, in the "White Helmets" initiative and has cooperated in successful urban planning and human development

programmes in the municipalities of Gaza, Rafah, Khan Yunis and Bethlehem.

There will not be any comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, as requested in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, unless progress is made simultaneously in all areas of the peace process. We have noted with concern the lack of dialogue between Syria and Israel regarding the Golan Heights, and we urge the parties to resume their talks in a frank and constructive spirit. The situation in southern Lebanon must also be resolved urgently. Argentina reiterates its commitment to territorial integrity, political independence and full sovereignty for Lebanon, and we reiterate the need to apply Security Council resolution 425 (1978) to the letter.

The peace process has entered into one of its most promising and yet most difficult phases. That is why we call upon the parties to take this unique opportunity and to continue on the path of law and understanding, which will lead to a true reconciliation between the peoples. Argentina hopes that one of the first achievements of the new millennium will be the consolidation of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)(*spoke in Arabic*): As we discuss agenda items 43 and 44 of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, it pleases me to convey my thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his two reports submitted under these two items pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 53/37 and 53/38 of 2 December 1998.

All the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories. But, Israel has continued to intensify its settlement activities instead of responding to those resolutions.

Anyone who follows Israeli policies and practices can see clearly the gradual and steady increase in the rate of settlement activity in the occupied Arab territories, particularly in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and its surrounding areas. These areas have witnessed a brutal increase in the building of new settlements and in the expansion of existing settlements, which have doubled in area. Such activity reveals Israel's hidden agenda: the establishment of a new geographic and demographic fait accompli. Expanding the city limits of Al-Quds, as one link in the Israeli expansionist chain, the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the confiscation of the identity cards of residents of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the demolition of Palestinian houses are other examples in this ongoing saga.

The Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and totally illegitimate. I would like to recall here Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which emphasized this and which called upon Israel to abide by its provisions. If Israel is really serious about reaching a just and comprehensive settlement in the region, it will have to respond to the international will and to the resolutions of international legitimacy and withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines that existed before 4 June 1967.

We emphasize that all the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 concerning the protection of civilian persons in time of war continue to apply to all Arab territories occupied since 1967.

The holding of a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention for the first time in the history of the Convention, and the fact that the High Contracting Parties affirmed the applicability of the provisions of the Convention to the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and called for full respect for this Convention, constitute a moral and ethical commitment on the part of the parties to the Convention.

Qatar calls on all States that have consulates or embassies in Al-Quds to respond to Security Council resolution 478 (1980), adopted on 20 August 1980, and to the many General Assembly resolutions calling for States to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The State of Qatar has supported the Middle East peace process since it was launched at Madrid on the basis of the formula of land for peace and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Qatar emphasizes once again its support for the peace process based on the principles on which it was launched.

Qatar calls upon the Israeli Government to expedite the start of talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and to implement all agreements concluded with the Palestinians in order to reach a just and comprehensive peace in the region. That would enable us to enter the new millennium with new hopes and aspirations; hopes of establishing peace, security and stability for all our

peoples and for future generations so that we all can enjoy a dignified life in freedom and can participate with other peoples in the building of human civilization.

Before I conclude, I must salute all those who are striving to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, particularly the sponsors of the peace process. I emphasize the importance of their role in this critical period, which requires greater efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call on the observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Hosseini (Organization of the Islamic Conference): The Middle East peace process was launched eight years ago with great hopes and expectations. Its main objective was to find a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine and the related conflict in the Middle East, the effects of which have left the Palestinian people in an unspeakably shattered state for over half a century. Their reward for wanting to live an independent, hardworking and honourable life in their own land, under their own sovereignty and as proud members of the international community of nations has been death, disablement, destruction of their homes, unemployment and violations of their civil and human rights by the Israeli authorities. And Israel's illegal occupation of southern Lebanon, the western Bekaa and the Syrian Golan continues.

The reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/54/457 and A/54/495 shed light on the realities of the situation I have just described.

At the Annual Coordinating Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held in New York on 1 October 1999, the OIC reaffirmed its support for the Middle East peace process, in accordance with the principles adopted at the Madrid Conference and consistent with United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the land for peace formula, all of which call for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and for the realization of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

At the meeting, the Foreign Ministers condemned Israel's policy to refuse to comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and to impose its jurisdiction and its administration on the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as Israel's policies of annexation, establishment of settlements, expropriation of lands, diversion of water resources, and imposition of Israeli nationality on Syrian citizens. They affirmed that all those measures are null and void, and constitute a violation of the rules and principles of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949; they demanded the complete withdrawal of Israel from the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967.

The Foreign Ministers strongly condemned Israel's continuing occupation of southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa and its arbitrary practices and military acts of aggression against Lebanese citizens and against the Palestinian refugees in their camps in Lebanon. They called upon the Security Council to take the necessary measures to put an immediate end to these acts of aggression, and called for the implementation of Security Council resolutions on Lebanon, especially Council resolution 425 (1978). At the meeting, the Foreign Ministers also affirmed their resolve to maintain the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders.

The OIC maintains the view that it is necessary to resume peace negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks from the point at which they stopped in February 1996, in line with the results that had been achieved and also on the same basis on which they were started in Madrid.

In the spirit of seeking peace and security in the Middle East region, the OIC once again draws attention to the dangerous situation that continues to prevail as a result of Israel's failure to comply with United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls upon Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to implement resolutions of the General Assembly and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) calling for the subjection of all Israeli atomic facilities to the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system. This would be an indispensable step for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction — primarily nuclear weapons — in the Middle East, and for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

On 29 November we commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People here at the United Nations with a traditional

meeting to mark the occasion. A message from the Secretary-General of the OIC was among those that were received from all over the world from heads of State and Government and international organizations. It was a message of peace, a call for reason and an appeal for the extension of every support to the Palestinian people to help alleviate their sufferings resulting from many years of occupation, repression and denial of the exercise of their inalienable national rights.

The OIC holds the view that the question of Palestine constitutes the core of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict, the only solution to which would be the independence of Palestine, bestowing dignity and sovereignty upon the Palestinian people, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as their national capital.

Stemming from the provisions of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and agreements reached between the parties, it is imperative that Israel ceases the construction and expansion of its illegal settlements on Palestinian lands and that it refrain from any acts that would arbitrarily alter the legal status and the demographic structure of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

At this stage, I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Ka of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his astute and dynamic leadership of the work of the Committee; and to recall the close and fruitful cooperation between the Committee and the OIC in support of the rights of the Palestinian people. I now pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his active and collaborative role in dealing with issues of Palestine and the Middle East.

I also take this opportunity to commend the roles being played by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority; and to Mr. Peter Hansen, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We express our appreciation for their work and that of their colleagues in the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations, especially the United Nations Development Programme, who have collectively supported the development efforts of the Palestinian people under very difficult conditions. In this connection, we fully share the view of the Secretary-General that UNRWA should be put on a sound financial footing so that the downgrading in its services to the Palestinian refugees can be avoided.

In conclusion, I would like to state that in the ongoing peace process lies the opportunity for uniting efforts for the attainment of peace, tranquillity and progress for countries in the Middle East and beyond, for they all stand to gain immeasurably from the long-awaited positive turn of events in that troubled region.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/54/L.40 and A/54/L.41.

We shall turn first to draft resolution A/54/L.40, entitled "Jerusalem". I should like to inform the Assembly that Togo has become a sponsor of this draft resolution.

A recorded vote has been requested.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic,

Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:
Israel

Abstaining:
Swaziland, United States of America, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.40 was adopted by 139 votes to 1, with 3 abstentions (resolution 54/37).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Barbados, Bolivia and the Republic of Moldova informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/54/L.41 is entitled "The Syrian Golan". I would also like to inform the Assembly that Egypt, Kuwait and Togo have become co-sponsors of this draft resolution.

A recorded vote has been requested.

In favour:
Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:
Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:
Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.41 was adopted by 92 votes to 2, with 53 abstentions (resolution 54/38).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Barbados, Benin and Bolivia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour, and the delegation of the Republic of Moldova had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour to explain the vote of the European Union on draft resolution A/54/L.41.

The European Union reiterates its firm commitment to a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the Madrid and Oslo Accords. The European Union warmly welcomes the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum and the recent resumption of the permanent status negotiations. We also fully support an early resumption of negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

As in previous years, the resolution regarding the Syrian Golan contains geographical references which prejudge the outcome of bilateral negotiations. That is why the European Union has again abstained in the voting.

The European Union regrets that this year again it has not been possible to reach agreement on the resolution on the Middle East peace process under this agenda item. We commend the initiators of this text — Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States — for their efforts to reach agreement with the interested parties.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Argentina voted in favour of draft resolution A/54/L.41 on the Syrian Golan because it considers that the essential aspect of this resolution is related to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of any State. This is an imperative norm of international law.

I wish also to clarify the position of the delegation of Argentina on operative paragraph 6. Our vote does not necessarily prejudge the contents of that operative paragraph, in particular as regards the line of 4 June 1967.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon)(*spoke in Arabic*): We were surprised the other day by the Israeli representative's reference to General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) relating to the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. He singled out a paragraph from that resolution on the duty of States to refrain from organizing terrorist acts in another State or carrying out such acts from their territory.

I would like here to indicate that Israel has consistently refused to abide by international resolutions. This is evidenced by the fact that its Permanent Representative has disregarded the resolutions and principles explicitly violated by his country, especially the principle that requires States, in their relations with other States, to refrain from the use or the threat of use of force by States against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the objectives of the Charter.

The representative of Israel also disregarded the principle contained in the paragraph immediately following the one he quoted. That paragraph states that the territory of a State shall not be the object of military occupation resulting from the use of force in contravention of the provisions of the Charter, and that no territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized.

In sum, this resolution is considered a major point of reference in international law. Israel flagrantly violates this law whereas the law supports the rights of people under foreign occupation. They have the right to wage a legitimate struggle for the liberation of their territories; hence, the paragraph that the Israeli representative excerpted is relevant to terrorism and not to legitimate resistance. There is a big difference between terrorism and legitimate resistance.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Israeli representative to two points. First, the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon preceded the resistance, which came after the occupation. Secondly, Israel's refusal to completely withdraw from southern Lebanon and to allow the United Nations forces to deploy up to international borders, in keeping with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), led to the emergence of the Lebanese resistance.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): I am really sorry to address the General Assembly at this late hour, but the statement just made by the representative of Lebanon compels me to respond.

It is unfortunate that the representative of Lebanon continues to attack Israel in this forum rather than to engage Israel in the constructive channel of negotiations that are available for resolving the issues at hand. His remarks serve only to distract attention from the fact that the Government of Lebanon is directly responsible for the volatile situation in the southern part of its territory, which it allows to continue, in contravention of international law.

Lebanon continues to wage a terrorist campaign against a neighbouring State, one which is declaredly aimed at the very existence of that State. Despite the statement just made by the representative of Lebanon, it should be recalled that the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and

Cooperation among States, contained in resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, provides that sovereignty carries with it a responsibility not to allow terrorism acts to be organized and perpetrated on one's territory or launched from it.

The policies of Lebanon are in direct conflict with that resolution. Instead of disarming the Hezbollah, as is its obligation under international norms, Lebanon grants the militia group free rein in southern Lebanon, leaving Israel with no option but to act in accordance with its sovereign right to self-defence. Nevertheless, Israel has repeatedly expressed its willingness to negotiate with Lebanon the implementation of resolution 425 (1978) in its entirety. This would restore, at long last, peace and security to our common border. However, rather than respond to that invitation, Lebanon has instead allowed the conflict to continue and the human toll to rise.

The confrontational remarks made here today only underscore Lebanon's ongoing refusal to negotiate a solution to the conflict. We call upon the Government of Lebanon to join us at the negotiating table with the aim of working together to restore peace and stability to our common border.

Mr. Tadmoury (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor once again, but I would like to ask the Israeli representative one question: what is the reason for the presence of Lebanese resistance forces in the south? It is the occupation. The root of the problem in Lebanon is the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, which runs counter to United Nations resolutions and other international laws, principles and norms.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): I believe that my earlier statement was clear enough. However, the representative of Lebanon saw fit to pose a question to me. I would like to suggest to him that the appropriate forum to discuss all pending questions between the two countries is the peace negotiations. I would like to reiterate our invitation to the Government of Lebanon to join Israel around the negotiating table in order to restore peace and stability to our common border.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/54/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/457)

Draft resolutions (A/54/L.42, A/54/L.43, A/54/L.44, A/54/L.45)

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I should like to comment on draft resolution A/54/L.45. I should simply like to say that the penultimate preambular paragraph of the draft resolution contains a typographical error. The end of the paragraph should read, "including the donor meeting held at Tokyo, on 14 and 15 October 1999". This is a purely technical matter that needs to be corrected. I am sure that the Secretariat will take my comments into account. The draft resolution needs no other change.

The Acting President: I have taken note of the statement by the representative of Senegal on that technical error.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/54/L.42, A/54/L.43, A/54/L.44 and A/54/L.45.

I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): My Government opposes the four draft resolutions under agenda item 44, entitled "Question of Palestine". The first three of these draft resolutions support institutions whose activities and approach to the issues are unbalanced and outdated. They barely take note of the considerable achievements that have occurred in the Middle East peace process — and progress continues to be made. The safe passage route between Gaza and the West Bank is operating, the Gaza seaport has been approved, further redeployments have been made, additional prisoners have been released and the parties have begun talks on a framework agreement for permanent status.

The General Assembly should be in the business of supporting this process of negotiation — supporting the attempt to reach agreements that can lead to a peaceful settlement of disputes. It should not be in the business of issuing one-sided criticism or authorizing the wasteful expenditure of funds for anachronistic committees and reports.

The draft resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/54/L.45) lays out the position of one party to the negotiations. By adopting this draft resolution, the General Assembly would seek to inappropriately interject its views into these negotiations. This is as unhelpful as it is ineffectual. It produces words, not results.

The United States strongly supports the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The United States is working hard to promote that objective. We regret that the drafts before us complicate those efforts and the efforts of the parties themselves to achieve a settlement. We will vote against these four draft resolutions and invite others to do the same.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): Israel will vote against the draft resolutions contained in documents A/54/L.42, A/54/L.43, A/54/L.44 and A/54/L.45. The ritualistic recycling of these outdated draft resolutions year after year remains utterly oblivious to the burgeoning peace process and the new realities in the Middle East.

Draft resolution A/54/L.42 and A/54/L.43 refer, respectively, to what are termed the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. Since their inception, these bodies have obstructed dialogue and understanding through a pre-set, one-sided portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They are engaged in activities which hinder, rather than promote, progress towards achieving a peaceful, negotiated and mutually acceptable solution.

In addition, these bodies expend valuable resources which could be better invested in responding to the real needs of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Draft resolution A/54/L.44 endorses the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat. This programme, through its various seminars, missions and exhibits, also promotes a distorted and one-sided perspective of the conflict.

Draft resolution A/54/L.45 claims to support a "peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", just as it makes reference to Israeli-Palestinian agreements, beginning with the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993. Yet the draft resolution, in content and purpose, actually goes against those agreements and undermines the peace process it professes to support. The Declaration of Principles and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which are cited in the preambular paragraphs, directly prohibit the use of such extraneous and prejudicial instruments as this draft resolution. As stated in article XXXI, sub-article 7, of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement of 28 September 1995,

> "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations".

Furthermore, it should be recalled that the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, wrote to the late Prime Minister of Israel, Itzhak Rabin, on 9 September 1993 that

> "The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations."

It should be further recalled that all diplomatic breakthroughs in the Middle East, beginning with the Camp David Accords right up until the recent Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, were arrived at exclusively through direct negotiations between the parties. However, this draft resolution openly seeks to predetermine the issues to be resolved by those negotiations, even as Israel and the Palestinians commit themselves to the permanent status talks that are now under way. Therefore, this draft resolution both violates existing agreements and undermines the integrity and the foundations of the peace process. That is why Israel must vote against this draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/54/L.42, A/54/L.43, A/54/L.44 and A/54/L.45.

We turn first to draft resolution A/54/L.42, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". I would like to inform the Assembly that the following additional Member States have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bahrain, Mali, Namibia, Oman, Togo and Viet Nam.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.42 was adopted by 105 votes to 3, with 48 abstentions (resolution 54/39).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Barbados informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/54/L.43, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". I would like to inform the Assembly that the following additional Member States have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bahrain, Mali, Namibia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Togo and Viet Nam.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland,

France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.43 was adopted by 107 votes to 3, with 47 abstentions (resolution 54/40).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Barbados informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: We turn next to draft resolution A/54/L.44, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat". I would like to inform the Assembly that the following additional Member States have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bahrain, Mali, Namibia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Togo and Viet Nam.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Micronesia (Federated States of), Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.44 was adopted by 151 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions (resolution 54/41).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Barbados informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.45, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". I would like to inform the Assembly that the following additional Member States have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bahrain, Mali, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Togo and Viet Nam.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China,

Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Micronesia (Federated States of), Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/54/L.45 was adopted by 149 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions (resolution 54/42).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Barbados informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/54/L.45 because it believes that a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine is one of the elements that is vital to the settlement of the Middle East conflict. However, I would like to reiterate the following regarding the content of operative paragraph 3.

Mexico notes that one of the basic principles of the peace process in the Middle East is the return of land in exchange for peace. The land-for-peace formula has proved its usefulness in the search for a solution to this particular conflict. It would seem risky, however, to make land-for-peace a universal legal principle to be applied as a norm in all conflicts.

Above and beyond that basic principle, there is the general principle of international law holding that conquest does not grant territorial rights. We all recognize, as a fundamental norm, that the acquisition of territory through the use of force is inadmissible. As a corollary to this universal principle, it must be concluded that the entirety of any territory occupied during an armed conflict must be returned to its legitimate owner without conditions.

For these reasons, the delegation of Mexico reiterates that, while we recognize the political value of the land-for-peace principle, we feel it would be unsound to raise this to the level of a general principle of international law. Mexico would like to call once again for greater precision in the language used to describe a political understanding that is not, and cannot be, a universal legal principle.

In fact, in the preambular part of draft resolution A/54/L.41, on the Syrian Golan, which the Assembly adopted in this meeting, the phrase used in English is "the formula of land for peace", an expression that seems to us to very accurately describe the understanding, but that the United Nations Secretariat regrettably insists on translating incorrectly into Spanish. The word "formula" should be translated as "*fórmula*" in Spanish, a word we would prefer to see in all draft resolutions on this matter. For Mexico, this is a question of legal terminological rigour and has no bearing on the substance of the political understanding.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour of explaining the vote of the European Union on the draft resolutions concerning the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, contained

in document A/54/L.42, and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, contained in document A/54/L.43.

Important progress has been made in the Middle East peace process over the years with a view to establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the area. The European Union warmly welcomes the recent signing of the Sharm-el Sheikh Memorandum and the resumption of permanent status negotiations. The European Union regrets that the mandate of the two United Nations entities in charge of the agenda item "Question of Palestine" do not better take into account the spirit of the peace process. That is why the European Union has, as in the cases of previous years, abstained in the voting on the two draft resolutions.

The European Union, however, welcomes the ongoing dialogue with the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We are prepared to continue this exchange of views, with the particular aim of adjusting the mandate and the activities of the Committee to the spirit of Madrid and the Oslo accords, in order to allow full support for and a constructive contribution to the peace process.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44.

I give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to convey our sincere thanks to all the Member States that supported the resolutions just adopted under the agenda items "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East". In particular, I wish to express our thanks to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to the States that sponsored these resolutions.

The wide support enjoyed by these resolutions — by a majority of Member States — is a matter of great significance. It reaffirms the commitment by the international community to uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to continue the efforts that we made to attain peace on the basis of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

All of this sends a crystal-clear and correct message to the Palestinian and Israeli sides. We earnestly hope that the Israeli side will abandon its present policy and positions and will start complying with requirements of international legitimacy.

With particular reference to resolution 54/37, on Jerusalem, I wish to point out that only Israel voted against it. The situation today reaffirms the significance of that Holy City to the whole international community. The unilateral possession of that city cannot be accepted, because it is important to all three monotheistic, revealed religions.

We had also hoped that the General Assembly would adopt a resolution on peace in the Middle East. We appreciate the efforts of the United States of America, the Russian Federation and Norway in this respect, but, regrettably, this did not take place. Whether delegations believe this or not, the reason the Assembly will not be adopting such a resolution is that the Israeli side — even with the advent of the new Israeli Administration — continues to renounce the principle of land for peace, and, in this case, it has refused to allow this principle to be noted in such a resolution. This behaviour calls into question the genuineness and credibility of all the efforts that are being made to reach a peaceful settlement.

The international community expects the United Nations Member States to observe the Charter and the resolutions of the United Nations. It expects them not to violate international law. Usually, even when a certain State does not behave in this fashion it shows a measure of shame and embarrassment. Israel is the single State that not only consistently violates hundreds of United Nations resolutions, including the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, but that does so defiantly in broad daylight. With neither shame nor impunity it talks of how it flouts those resolutions.

In recent years it has not limited itself to such behaviour, but rather, as we have seen today, it has also accused the international community of being misguided and has called on it to return to the right path. Israel claims that the error lies in the resolutions of international legitimacy. During the last 30 years, Israel's policies have been in staunch opposition to all the relevant resolutions. Its policies have not reflected respect for international law or the principles of the Charter. This is unprecedented behaviour. It is hard to understand such a policy.

The international community has to take the necessary steps to end this misguided conduct. No State

is above international law or above this international Organization. We all have to work on this basis, because it is the proper foundation for achieving just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This process should begin with the settlement of the question of Palestine and allow for the coexistence of the peoples and States of the region, including the Palestinian State.

I wish to reiterate my gratitude to all the delegations and to the President of the Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.